



News Release

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Utah Awarded \$100,000 “Healthy States” Grant to Build Community Gardens

Utah Department of Health Partners to Help Combat Obesity

(SALT LAKE CITY) – Utah is one of 13 states to receive a \$100,000 grant from the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices. Utah’s winning proposal is a community gardens project that will increase opportunities for Utahns in low-income neighborhoods of Salt Lake and Weber Counties to participate in gardening.

The idea behind community gardens is that those individuals managing the garden will determine how and to whom the produce is distributed, but generally anyone who works to maintain the gardens has the opportunity to harvest and eat what they grow. The vision of the year-long gardens project is that it will help improve the health of neighborhoods by getting them moving and increasing their access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The grant funds will improve access to healthy options by working together with low-income neighborhood leaders and community members to develop community gardens. An additional goal is to provide a means to educate the public about the value of gardening, the potential health benefits of home or community gardening and about availability of gardening resources. Through this initiative, gardening workshops and technical assistance will be provided to at-home and community gardeners.

“The funding from this grant will be put directly into the hands of community groups to develop

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Page 2 of 2 – “Utah Awarded \$100,000 “Healthy States” Grant to Build Community Gardens

their own gardens. It will empower neighborhoods to improve their health by creating opportunities to improve eating habits and get active at the same time,” said Lynda Blades, physical activity coordinator, Utah Department of Health. “Besides the health benefits, community gardens can beautify and build unity in a neighborhood.”

Wasatch Community Gardens (WCG), a non-profit leader in community gardening serving the Salt Lake Valley will be instrumental in implementing the project. Their organization will receive a portion of the funding to be used for staff support, education and training for gardeners, as well as a “tool library.” These resources will allow WCG to better serve the needs of low-income communities. A total of \$30,000 will be awarded directly to community groups to help enhance or develop their community gardens, and the remainder of the funding will be used for a media campaign promoting the health benefits of gardening.

“This is a unique opportunity for neighborhoods to turn weed patches into community gardens. Helping people grow fresh produce gives them a lifelong skill, not just a one time nutritious meal,” said Emily Aagaard, executive director of WCG.

Community groups interested in applying for funding to participate in this project may contact Lynda Blades at (801) 538-6229 or lblades@utah.gov. There will be an opportunity to apply for funding this fall. A qualified review panel will select communities to receive grants to implement their projects during the 2007 gardening season.

The 13 “Healthy States” grants were awarded by the National Governors Association to support states’ efforts to combat the epidemics of unhealthy lifestyles and obesity among Americans.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.